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### The pastoral purpose of Q's two-stage son of man Christology

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## The Pastoral Purpose of Q's Two-Stage Son of Man Christology

### 1. Introduction

For those who advocate a titular approach for investigating the christology of a document, Q must seem a particularly impoverished source in terms of its reflection on the person of Jesus. Cullmann, himself a classical practitioner of titular christology, while privileging such an approach, nevertheless acknowledges that in some ways it creates a false dichotomy between the person and the work of Christ. He states, 'The New Testament hardly ever speaks of the person of Christ without at the same time speaking of his work.'<sup>1</sup> Thus in discussing the christology that Q may present, it is necessary to consider both the titles used and the significance it attributes to the work of Christ.

Here it is argued that Q constructs a two-stage Son of Man christology. The first stage presents a suffering figure whose experiences align with the contemporary situation and liminal experience of the audience of Q. The second stage focuses on the future return of the Son of Man.<sup>2</sup> It is at this point that group members will receive both victory and vindication. However, these two stages are not always maintained as discrete moments. By employing the title 'the coming one', Q at some points collapses this temporal distinction to allow the pastorally comforting message that some of the eschatological rewards can be enjoyed in the contemporary situation of the community.

### 2. Missing Titles

A preliminary survey of the infrequent or non-use of certain titles is both instructive and perhaps a little surprising. Depicting Jesus as 'Christ' was in certain strands of the early Jesus movement a way of encapsulating messianic hopes and expectations. Admittedly, this title later became transformed into little more than part of a double-barrelled name, but nevertheless its usage remained a constant feature in references to Jesus. This makes its total absence from Q striking. Commenting on the Jewish background of the semantic associations of Christ/Messiah language, Tuckett makes the following observation.

There is also the fact that 'Messiah' is a very Jewish term, and as we shall see Q represents a very 'Jewish' stratum of the tradition, so that the absence of the term from Q is all the more striking. Q's non-use of the term may be purely coincidental. It would perhaps be rather bold to deduce from the non-use of the term in Q that the idea of Jesus' 'Messiahship' was actually problematic for the Q Christians.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> O. CULLMANN, *The Christology of the New Testament* (2nd ed.; London: SCM, 1963) 3.

<sup>2</sup> It may be the case that such a two-stage christology arises from a sense of confusion in the community over the delay of the parousia, see H.T. FLEDDERMANN, *Q: A Reconstruction and Commentary*, BiTS 1 (Leuven: Peeters, 2005) 130. However, while this remains a possible motivation for constructing a two-part christology, this suggestion is ultimately not provable from the text. Hence it is considered more appropriate to take the christology of Q as it stands in the reconstruction of that document without speculating about the forces that led to the formulation of such a christology.

<sup>3</sup> C.M. TUCKETT, *Q and the History of Early Christianity: Studies on Q* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1996) 214.

Thus while reasons for non-use are not easily explained, the absence of the term from Q is striking. There may be a theological reason for the reservation in using the term, but this is not immediately obvious.

The title *kur iōj* does gain fleeting reference in Q. However, these scattered occurrences need to be viewed against the preponderance of usages in the Pauline letters.<sup>4</sup> In Paul's writings 'Lord' is a preferred and privileged form of addressed reserved for the use of adherents of his scattered communities about the eastern Mediterranean world. However, in Q the most positive use of the title occurs in Q 7.6, where the centurion requesting the healing of his servant addresses Jesus using the vocative, *kurie*. It may be of significance that this form of appellation has been placed on the lips of a Gentile who is seeking a miracle from Jesus. The use of the term in Q 9.59 appears to be little more than a polite form of address.<sup>5</sup> In this sense it may align with the use by the centurion where it connoted a degree of deference, but not necessarily homage. Perhaps the most striking example of *kur iōj* terminology applied to Jesus in Q is double vocative *kurie kurie* of Q 6.46. Here the sense is negative, questioning the attitude of those who make such a plaintive and elevated cry, but their actions do not align with such a declaration, *ti, de, nē kaleite\ kurie kurie( kai. ouv poieite a]legwÈ(Q 6.46)*. This discussion betrays a certain antipathy towards those who use this title, but who, at least from the perspective of the one who penned this question, fail to do what they have been instructed by Jesus. This appears to show that Q considers the faith of those who use this title as being defective, at least in some sense. Consequently, this scepticism about groups of Christians who use the title Lord without the requisite matching actions might explain the almost total reluctance on the part of Q to apply it to Jesus.

One christological title that Q appears willing to own, albeit sparingly, is 'Son of God'. In the context of the temptation story the title is used by the devil on two occasions to question Jesus status (Q 4.3, 9), but for readers of this story such an identification as 'Son of God' is not meant to be doubted. The second Q context which alludes to this title does not employ the full form, but simply has Jesus refer to himself as 'Son' of his Father (Q 10.22). However, in both cases the use is a little unusual. In the first it is provocative. Discussing the conditional statement *eivuiōj ei=tou/qeou/* Fledermann notes, '[t]his clause raises immediately the question "Who is Jesus?" by suggesting that Jesus is the Son of God.'<sup>6</sup> Similarly the echoes of Johannine language in Q 10.21-22, have made commentators question how well the theological perspectives of this passage cohere with the rest of Q. Therefore, the three titles discussed, 'Christ', 'Lord' and 'Son of God', offer little insight into the

<sup>4</sup> The title *kur iōj* is used in Q on thirteen occasions: Q 6.46; 7.6; 9.59; 12.42, 43, 45, 46; 13.25; 14.21; 19.15, 16, 18, 21. This number is based upon the reconstruction of Q as presented in J.M. ROBINSON, P. HOFFMANN, J.S. KLOPPENBORG (eds.), *The Critical Edition of Q* (Minneapolis/Leuven: Fortress/Peeters, 2000). Of these thirteen occurrences only the first three refer directly to Jesus, the last ten all occur in Q parables to denote a householder, or other authority figure.

<sup>5</sup> Although the vital word *kur iōj* is omitted in some important manuscripts of Lk 9.59 such as B\* D pc sy<sup>s</sup>, its inclusion in the overwhelming majority of the manuscript tradition, P<sup>45.75</sup> & A B<sup>2</sup> C L W Q X Y 0181 J<sup>1.13</sup> 33 m lat sy<sup>c.p.h</sup> co, including the early papyri makes the inclusion of this term the much more likely reading in the Lukan context. The decision of Fitzmyer to omit the term with little discussion appears strange, and perhaps betrays a reliance on the printed text of NA<sup>25</sup>, J.A. FITZMYER, *The Gospel According to Luke*, AB 28 (New York: Doubleday, 1981) 833. However, while the term is the more likely reading in Luke, an even stronger case can be mounted for Q, since the term is found in the Matthean parallel, Matt 8.21.

<sup>6</sup> FLEDDERMANN, *Q: A Reconstruction and Commentary*, 258.

christological understandings either of the author of Q or those for whom he was writing.

### 3. *The Present Son of Man*

If the three titles mentioned above suffer from a paucity of use in Q, the same cannot be said for the title 'Son of Man'. Connections have been noted between the concept of wisdom and references to Jesus as Son of Man. Tuckett comments upon the example of Q 7.35. He states, '[t]he Wisdom saying in Q 7.35 is immediately preceded by the saying (v. 34) that it is as "Son of Man" that Jesus is experiencing hostility to his failure to adopt an ascetic lifestyle.'<sup>7</sup> Thus there is recognition of the link between wisdom and the suffering Son of Man. Yet within the Q tradition there is another aspect to Son of Man christology which revolves around the notion of the eschatological disclosure of the identity of this Son of Man figure.

Hence, the term 'Son of Man' is multivalent in Q. Thus, as Fleddermann observes, this is reflected in a two-stage christology which builds upon the understanding of the two comings of the 'Son of Man'.

In the past Jesus came as the Son of Man to inaugurate the kingdom of God by his ministry of exorcising, healing and teaching, and through his life of faith, suffering and death. In the future Jesus will come as the eschatological Son of Man to save and to judge and to usher in the definitive manifestation of the kingdom.<sup>8</sup>

Such a distinction is helpful, but it raises the further question of the reason for Q formulating its christology via this somewhat convoluted two-staged process. Fleddermann appears to allude to a partial answer to this question, although he does not explicitly raise the issue himself. He sees this split between inauguration and fulfilment as constructed to account for the parousia delay.<sup>9</sup>

The 'Son of Man' title occurs ten times in Q,<sup>10</sup> and of these the final six may be classed as future looking or eschatologically oriented (i.e., Q 12.8, 10, 40; 17.24, 26, 30). By contrast the initial four Son of Man sayings refer to Jesus during the time of his earthly ministry (i.e., Q 6.22; 7.34; 9.58; 11.30).<sup>11</sup> The description of Jesus as 'the coming one' *ὁ ἐρχόμενος*, complements the christological understanding of Jesus as the Son of Man in Q.<sup>12</sup> This is also related to the two-stage Son of Man christology that is central to the sayings source. 'Q first presents Jesus' coming into the present world as the suffering and homeless Son of Man (Q 6,22-23; 7,34; 9,58), and only then does Q open up a full presentation of Jesus as the future savior and judge (Q 12,8-9. 40; 17,24. 26. 30).'<sup>13</sup>

By presenting the motif of suffering and homelessness as part of earthly experience of the Son of Man, the author of Q is presenting a christology based on

<sup>7</sup> C.M. TUCKETT, *Christology and the New Testament: Jesus and His Earliest Followers* (Edinburgh: University Press, 2001) 196.

<sup>8</sup> FLEDDERMANN, *Q: A Reconstruction and Commentary*, 130.

<sup>9</sup> FLEDDERMANN, *Q: A Reconstruction and Commentary*, 130.

<sup>10</sup> These occurrences are Q 6.22; 7.34; 9.58; 11.30; 12.8, 10, 40; 17.24, 26, 30.

<sup>11</sup> See J.M. ROBINSON, 'The Son of Man in the Sayings Gospel Q' in C. HEIL and J. VERHEYDEN (eds.), *The Sayings Gospel Q: Collected Essays By James M. Robinson* (Leuven: Peeters, 2005) 405; reprinted from Christoph Elsas et al. (eds.), *Tradition und Translation: Zum Problem der interkulturellen Übersetzbarkeit religiöser Phänomene – Festschrift für Casten Colpe zum 65. Geburtstag*, (Berlin/New York: de Gruyter, 1994) 315-335.

<sup>12</sup> The description of Jesus as 'the coming one' *ὁ ἐρχόμενος*, occurs three times in Q, 3.16; 7.19; and 13.35.

<sup>13</sup> FLEDDERMANN, *Q: A Reconstruction and Commentary*, 131.

humiliation and rejection during the earthly phase of Jesus' existence.<sup>14</sup> Yet this is not solely presented from the third person perspective, but reflects the shared lot of the readers of Q. Thus in Q's opening reference to the Son of Man such rejection is presented as the shared experience of Q believers. From this perspective the beatitude for the persecuted depicts allegiance to the Son of Man as the cause of rejection.

makarioi, este of an. one dšwsin uñaj kai. diwxsin kai. eipwsin pañ ponhron kaqVuñwñ  
eñeken tou/uidu/tou/anqrwpou (Q 6,22)

While this beatitude may be concerned with the fate of followers, the saying in Q 9.58 refers to Jesus himself.<sup>15</sup> Although admittedly the experience of alienation and homelessness is in some ways self-imposed, by the choice of an itinerant life (o` de uiōj tou/anqrwpou ouk epe pou/thn kef al hn kl iñh), it is also externally generated by the lack of response to the proclaimed message. By contrast, the charge of gluttony and being a drunkard (Q 7.34) is a direct criticism from those who find the libertine lifestyle of Jesus to be disquieting.

This linking of the rejection of the Son of Man during his earthly ministry with the present experience of his followers serves both pastoral and pedagogical purposes for readers of Q. The description in Lk 6.22 employs the verb *af/orizw*, which, as Bovon notes, 'means a separation, more probably religious excommunication from the synagogue than social discrimination.'<sup>16</sup> This more detailed description with obvious overtones of formal synagogue expulsion stands in contrast to the vaguer notion of rejection that is announced in Q. At an earlier stage of the Jesus movement the experience of ostracism resulting from allegiance to the Son of Man may have consisted of personal acts of shunning and rejection, rather than formalized debarring from synagogue worship. Yet, just as the acts of rejection were less formalized, so also the Jesus movement had yet to develop a sustained response to such ostracism. The Q document in part may represent an early attempt to respond to such experiences. Part of this response appears to be a celebration of the encounter with those who persecute, based upon the prior sufferings of the Son of Man. Therefore, pastorally readers are shown that there is solidarity with Jesus through suffering. While this may sustain faith in the short term, psychologically in the face of present persecution new religious movements often need to formulate a belief that creates expectations of future reversal.<sup>17</sup>

#### 4. *The Coming One*

For Q the 'pay-off' for such persecution in its contemporary situation is envisaged as arising from an eschatological unveiling of the true status of adherents to the Son of Man, coupled with an announcement of judgment upon their persecutors. This is achieved primarily through the second stage of the christological role ascribed to the Son of Man. Yet even in the first section of Q where the Son of Man sayings focus on the earthly ministry of Jesus, the complementary use of the description 'the

<sup>14</sup> At the level of social history the material in Q 9.58 is often seen as reflecting a call to itinerancy. Thus Kloppenborg comments, 'The characterization of the Son of Man as one who has "no place to lay his head" (Q9:58) and the so-called equipment instruction (Q10:4) appears to privilege a homeless or itinerant lifestyle.' J.S. KLOPPENBORG, *Excavating Q: The History and the Setting of the Sayings Gospel* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 2000) 179.

<sup>15</sup> TUCKETT, *Christology and the New Testament*, 196.

<sup>16</sup> F. BOVON, *Luke 1: A Commentary on Luke 1:1-9:50* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2002) 227.

<sup>17</sup> On the way in which new religious movements operate in tension with the prevailing sociocultural environment see W.S. BAINBRIDGE, *The Sociology of New Religious Movements* (New York/London, Routledge, 1997) 31-59.

coming one' allows a preliminary announcement of the eschatological role of this figure. The first time the title 'coming one' occurs is in the description of the future baptism (which stands in contrast to the water baptism of John) which will be administered through the element of spirit and fire, *autoj uñaj baptisei en pneumatì agiō kai puri*, (Q 3.16). Although Fleddermann refers to this text as a 'salvation-judgment oracle' he appears to find the salvific component only in the spirit element of baptism, '[b]aptism in the Holy Spirit refers to the Spirit as God's eschatological agent for salvation.'<sup>18</sup> By contrast 'fire' is viewed as being associated almost exclusively with judgment. Thus Fleddermann states '[b]aptism in fire refers to judgment as the second relative clause points out (Q 3,17).'<sup>19</sup> However, it is debatable whether the twin agents, spirit and fire, can have their functions so neatly split. Instead it appears that the coming one brings two elements that are together the agents of affirming and purifying to effect salvation,<sup>20</sup> but simultaneously function to convict and destroy those who do not receive the message, thereby acting as the agents of judgment.

The occurrence of the title 'the coming one' is linked to the proclamation of the Baptist in its initial use, when John announced the arrival of the eschatological figure (Q 3.16). The second occurrence also involves John. While languishing in prison according to the Matthean context (Matt 11.2), but simply as a query of clarification according to Luke (Lk 7.18, probably closer to the original Q wording) John seeks assurance concerning Jesus' identity as the coming one. The response given by Jesus is allusive, and the catalogue of activities drawn from Isaianic passages do not readily fit into a hitherto known set of Messianic expectations. Rather, this passage seems to be the most obvious example in Q where the two-stage christology is collapsed into a single moment of self-revelation. As Tuckett comments, '[t]he Q passage [Q 7.22] thus presents Jesus in more general terms as the bringer of the expected new age, and as the medium through whom the conditions of the new age were being established in his own ministry.'<sup>21</sup> At this moment of inner doubt expressed by John, the author effectively compresses the distinction between eschaton and present in order to offer a word of comfort, albeit a somewhat veiled and ambiguous description, concerning the identity of Jesus as the future coming one.

The final explicit description of Jesus as the coming one, occurs after Son of Man terminology has begun to be used in an eschatological manner (Q 12.8, 10, 40). As part of his lament over Jerusalem, Jesus announces that he will not be seen in the future until the city confesses *euloghēnoij o' exconēnoij en omōmati kuriou* (Q 13.35, cf. Ps 117.26a LXX). Although this phrase occurs in the triple tradition (Matt 21.9b// Mark 11.9c//Lk 19.38; cf. Jn 12.13b), this memorable doxology from the Psalms appears to have been used in Q 13.35 independently of the Markan tradition. The tradition here speaks not of external judgment being visited upon Jerusalem, but of the city's barrenness arising from its unwillingness to be receptive to the coming one. The perspective is futuristic, but it is an inceptive future perspective which depends on a change of attitude to bring about a future state of blessing. Viewing Q 13.34-35 primarily as a wisdom saying, Robinson sees the ultimate rejection of Jerusalem as a self-inflicted fate stemming from its own rejection of the prophets.

<sup>18</sup> FLEDDERMANN, *Q: A Reconstruction and Commentary*, 231.

<sup>19</sup> FLEDDERMANN, *Q: A Reconstruction and Commentary*, 231.

<sup>20</sup> The classic expression of fire as a purifying salvific agent is to be found in 1 Cor 3.13-15.

<sup>21</sup> TUCKETT, *Christology and the New Testament*, 194.

Here the withdrawal of Sophia is put into apocalyptic context of the future judgment by Jesus the son of humanity at his parousia. The judgmental apocalyptic context has appropriated the Deuteronomic view of history as consisting of the repeated rejection of the prophets until in the end Israel is itself rejected.<sup>22</sup>

Robinson helpfully highlights the Deuteronomistic element in this saying, but it is less clear whether it is a bleak prophecy of inescapable judgment, or whether there is a more open attitude to the possibility of repentance for the inhabitants of Jerusalem before the final judgment. While this Q passage provides little reflection on how such sentiments relate to contemporary believers, it does exhibit a sense of triumphalism in relation to the certainty of the fate of Jerusalem as being linked to its response to the coming one.

### 5. *The Future Son of Man*

Against this wider context of Son of Man statements that relate to the earthly ministry and the preliminary survey of the portrayal of the figure described as the coming one, it is possible to investigate Son of Man sayings that have a future aspect. These occur in three blocks of Q material: (i) the exhortation to fearless preaching, Q 12.2-12; (ii) the unexpected return of the Son of Man, Q 12.40; and (iii) the apocalyptic discourse, Q 17.23-35.

Set in a juridical context, the first future reference to the Son of Man is in relation to this figure's reciprocal confession or denial in the eschaton of those who either confess or deny Jesus in their present situation. While both Bultmann and Tödt argue that this saying creates a distinction between the figures of Jesus and the Son of Man,<sup>23</sup> Fleddermann critiques this interpretation for failing 'to deal adequately with the parallelism of the saying.'<sup>24</sup> Moreover, there is a further parallelism between the act of confessing or denying Jesus in Q 12.8-9 and the action of speaking against the Son of Man in the immediately following Q 12.10. The most natural way to read this complex of sayings is by identifying Jesus and the Son of Man as the same figure. Hence public commitment to Jesus during one's life leads to a saving commitment to that individual by Jesus himself in the eschatological age. Thus it appears that the author of this tradition viewed the existence of his audience on two horizons. The first is the contemporary situation, in which people are pressed to declare publicly their allegiance to or non-alignment with Jesus. It is perhaps impossible to decide whether the setting is that of the courtroom or the synagogue, and anyway such a division may be a false one reflecting modern institutional separations that are meaningless in the ancient world. Although probably stemming from a later period, the tradition in Jn 12.42 testifies to the existence of certain crypto-Christians who, according to Martyn 'had believed in Jesus, but who, in order to avoid excommunication, refused to make a public confession of that belief.'<sup>25</sup> While perhaps not as formalized as in the case of the conflict behind the Johannine text, it nevertheless appears that for Q the contemporary horizon requires that a call be made to believers to publicly declare

<sup>22</sup> J.M. ROBINSON, 'Jesus as Sophos and Sophia: Wisdom Tradition and the Gospels' in C. HEIL and J. Verheyden (eds.), *The Sayings Gospel Q: Collected Essays By James M. Robinson* (Leuven: Peeters, 2005) 128; reprinted from R.L. WILKEN, (eds), *Aspects of Wisdom in Judaism and Early Christianity*, (Notre Dame/London: Notre Dame Univ. Press, 1975) 1-16.

<sup>23</sup> R. BULTMANN, *The History of the Synoptic Tradition* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1963) 112, 128, 151-152; H.E. TÖDT, *The Son of Man*, (London: SCM, 1965) 55-60, 224-226, 339-344.

<sup>24</sup> FLEDDERMANN, *Q: A Reconstruction and Commentary*, 591.

<sup>25</sup> J.L. MARTYN, *History and Theology in the Fourth Gospel*, NTL (3rd ed; Louisville, WJK, 2003) 159.

their faith and take the consequences that such open confession brings. To cry 'Lord, Lord' (Q 6.46) in private is, for the author of Q, a christologically bankrupt declaration, if this is not also accompanied by a public confession of faith. Yet there is also a second horizon which according to Q is directly related to those actions taken in the present. Open confession in the present age is seen as resulting in the Son of Man's positive confession about such individuals in the age to come. Therefore the payoff for suffering exclusion and ostracism in the earthly existence is that one will receive inclusion and welcome in the age that is inaugurated by the Son of Man's return.

The second reference to the future role of the Son of Man concerns the unexpected nature of his return (Q 12.40). This statement, *uñei/ ginesce ei oi noi (of i h' ouvdokeite wfa| o' uioj tou/ anqrwpou ercet ai*, affirms two related 'truths' that need to be communicated. First, the return of the Son of Man is viewed as certain. The present tense of *ercet ai* here providing the sense of an imminent return which can be spoken of as if it were already in progress. Second, although certainty about the return is given, the timing is uncertain. This uncertainty is the basis of the hortatory imperative that opens the saying, 'be prepared'. Thus the response to the certainty of the return of the Son of Man is not complacency or inaction, but preparation. Although there is debate concerning whether the preceding material in Lk 12.35-38 belonged to Q, there is little doubt that the immediately following material (Q 12.42-46) did. Thus Tuckett observes, '[Q] 12.40 coheres extremely closely with 12.42-46 in terms of subject matter: both concern the unexpected return of the 'SM' (12:40)/the master (*kurioj*) of the story (12:42-46) which will involve potential disaster for those who are unprepared.'<sup>26</sup> In graphic terms the following parable envisages lack of preparedness in terms of a slave who abuses his fellows during the absence of the master. The fate that awaits such a one appears disproportionate to the offence, but consequently emphasizes the perceived seriousness of that offence. In relation to the use of Son of Man terminology in this context Fitzmyer suggests 'the title is being used to depict him in his role as judge of human life.'<sup>27</sup> Yet judgment language is not found in Q 12.39-40, although admittedly there are acts of vengeance in Q 12.46. In fact, in a striking metaphor, in Q 12.39-40 the Son of Man is compared to a burglar whose unannounced arrival demands concentrated watchfulness.

The last example of future-oriented Son of Man sayings occurs in Q 17.23-35. Here the emphasis falls upon the events that will surround the return of this figure and stylistically the author links this material by repeating the Son of Man title (Q 17.24, 26, 30). Moreover, as Fleddermann states, 'the threefold repetition of the clause "so will be the day of the Son of Man", and the catchword "day" (*hñer a*) bind the examples together.'<sup>28</sup> The first example states that in contrast to false reports, the actual coming will be indisputable, for it will be as brilliant and visible as lightning (Q 17.24). This statement stands as a corrective to rumours and false expectations about the coming of the Son of Man. The so-called rumours' saying of Q 17.23 concludes with an injunction against being convinced by such suggestions.<sup>29</sup> By contrast the immediately following lightning saying in Q 17.24 declares that the return will not be

<sup>26</sup> C.M. TUCKETT, *Q and the History of Early Christianity* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1996) 251.

<sup>27</sup> J.A. FITZMYER, *The Gospel According to Luke*, AB 28A (New York: Doubleday, 1985) 986.

<sup>28</sup> FLEDDERMANN, *Q: A Reconstruction and Commentary*, 830.

<sup>29</sup> The exact wording of Q is somewhat difficult to determine at this point. Fleddermann, (*Q: A Reconstruction and Commentary*, 827) prefers the Matthean form *nh. pisteushte* (Matt 24.26), whereas *The Critical Edition of Q* (502) tentatively adopts the Lukan form *h. apelqhte nhde. diwخته* (Lk 17.23).



gradual or progressive, but decisive and instant. Pastorally this warns readers of Q against being caught up in speculations surrounding predictions of return since these are seen as futile because the parousia is presented an event that cannot be missed.

The remaining two Son of Man sayings act as a framing device for the description of events in the days of Noah. Here the narrative sequence in Q probably runs in the following order, Q 17, 26-27, 30.<sup>30</sup>

- 26 kaqwj ~~egeneto en~~ taij hñeraij Nwé ouf wj ~~estai kai. en th/ hñer a|~~ tou/ uiòu/ tou/ anqr wpou\
- 27 wj gar hsan en taij hñeraij ekeinaij trwgontej kai, pinontej kai, gamouñtej kai. ganizontej( acri hj hñeraj eishlqen Nwé ejv thn kibwton kai. hñqen o` kataklusnoj kai. hren pantaj Å
- 30 ouf wj ~~estai kai. hñer a|~~ o` uiòj tou/ anqr wpou apokaluptetai Å<sup>1</sup>

The story of Noah acts paradigmatically, marrying together the themes of unexpectedness and judgment. These aspects appear to characterize the way in which Q understands the principal features of the return of the Son of Man especially in terms of the impact upon those who are not part of the community of believers. While the Q community aligns its present sufferings with those experienced during the earthly ministry of the Son of Man, it looks forward to an eschatological vindication with a reversal of fate. In the coming age the persecutors of the community will be swept away like the recalcitrant ones who mocked Noah.

## 6. Conclusions

The favoured christological title in Q is Son of Man, but this is not employed in a univocal manner. Q offers a two-stage Son of Man christology. In the present situation of the author and his audience their experience aligns with the sufferings endured by Jesus who depicts himself as Son of Man (Q 9.58). However, the theology of Q is not just a variant on notions of Stoic endurance. Rather, hope is conceived in terms of future reversal and eschatological vindication. It is here that the future Son of Man sayings offer both hope and ultimate victory to Q believers. The sayings dealing with confession and denial (Q 12.8-9) portray present allegiances as determinative for future destiny. The theme of judgment that is present in this logion also resurfaces in Q 17.26-27, 30. In this context the universal nature of that final assize comes to the fore.<sup>32</sup> The negative aspect of the universal judgment is present in Q 17.26-27, with a fate awaiting non-community members similar to that which befell the majority of people in the days of Noah. However, judgment is not a totally negative concept in Q. In Q 12.8-9 it brings vindication and victory for those who confess Jesus, and the Baptist's proclamation of the coming one, who will arrive with the elements of spirit and fire, alludes both to judgment and to purification.

The use of the title 'coming one' is important in terms of the two-stage Son of Man christology, since it creates a bridge that links the present role of the suffering Son of Man with the future role as eschatological judge. This is done not only by

<sup>30</sup> This is the reconstruction offered by ROBINSON, HOFFMANN, KLOPPENBORG (eds.), *The Critical Edition of Q*, 512-519; and FLEDDERMANN, *Q: A Reconstruction and Commentary*, 827. These two reconstructions agree in the sequencing of the material, although there are minor differences in their respecting wording.

<sup>31</sup> For the actual reconstruction of the wording the text presented in *The Critical Edition of Q*, 512-519, has been followed.

<sup>32</sup> This universal aspect is seen by Fleddermann as emphasizing the geographical extent of the future activities of the Son of Man. 'The final judgment comes upon all everywhere, and both nature and history point to it.' FLEDDERMANN, *Q: A Reconstruction and Commentary*, 831.

creating a link between present and future, although this is part of the mechanism employed especially in Q 3.16-17. Rather, in a more sophisticated way Q also collapses the dimension of time, as history revolves around the coming one in Q 7.22. This is achieved by bringing the eschatological horizon into the present. The author of Q achieves this through Jesus' reply to the Baptist concerning his own fulfilment of the Isaianic activities. As Bock succinctly notes, '[t]he time of eschaton is evidenced in Jesus' works.'<sup>33</sup> This is an extremely important factor in analyzing the way Q formulates its christology for a liminal and persecuted audience. The earthly ministry of Jesus assures the community that their own sufferings are imitations of those experienced by him as the Son of Man. His future return will be the age of judgment and vindication, when their steadfast confession of Jesus will be rewarded by his confession of the faithful as his own.<sup>34</sup> Yet these two aspects are not totally polarized. The fact that the eschatological horizon has broken into the present through the ministry of Jesus, means that there is a foretaste of future blessing in the community's own present. Thus the christology of Q is formulated with a strong pastoral concern, which addresses the perceived present persecutions of the Q community. Believers are promised future reversal, along with a partial experience of that eschatological future in their present situation.

School of Divinity, University of Edinburgh  
Mound Place, Edinburgh, EH1 2LX, UK

Paul Foster

## SUMMARY

It is argued that Q constructs a two-stage Son of Man christology. The first stage presents a suffering figure whose experiences align with the contemporary situation and liminal experience of the audience of Q. The second stage focuses on the future return of the Son of Man. It is at this point that group members will receive both victory and vindication. However, these two stages are not always maintained as discrete moments. By employing the title 'the coming one', Q at some points collapses this temporal distinction to allow the pastorally comforting message that some of the eschatological rewards can be enjoyed in the contemporary situation of the community.

<sup>33</sup> D.L. BOCK, *Luke 1:1-9:50*, BECNT (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker, 1994) 662.

<sup>34</sup> The positive aspect of this confession by Jesus on behalf of those who have openly declared their faith is recognized by Valantasis. Commenting on individuals who make such open confession Valantasis notes 'Jesus will stand up for them at the last day, giving positive testimony in the eschatological divine court in the presence of angels who surround God's judgment seat.' R. VALANTASIS, *The New Q: A Fresh Translation with Commentary* (New York/London: T&T Clark – A Continuum imprint, 2005) 157.